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Aspin Plans to Introduce New CIA Charter Proposal

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Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.) said yesterday he plans to introduce a proposed new charter for the CIA aimed at avoiding the pitfalls of the bills now before Congress.

Aspin, chairman of the House Intelligence Oversight subcommittee, said he recognized he was "adding to a legislative landscape on the verge of becoming crowded" but said he thinks a new proposal needed to steer a middle course between too much regulation and too little.

The key bills now are a comprehensive, 172-page proposal by Sen. Walter D. Huddleston (D-Ky.) and an abbreviated version sponsored by Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.).

Aspin said he thought the Huddleston proposal "an exceedingly complex bill, confusing, suffering from too much compromise all the way around."

The Moynihan bill, on the other hand, Aspin contended, is "excessively simple" and "gives the intelligence community relief from every ill it either has suffered or has fancied it might suffer under the law or at the hands of the Congress."

In its initial form, the Moynihan proposal would make it easier for the CIA to initiate covert actions; restrict reports to the Senate and House Intelligence committees, exempt most CIA operations from the Freedom of Information Act and make it a crime to disclose the names of CIA operatives abroad.

Aspin said his bill, to be introduced today, would:

- Protect undercover agents from having their names published by pro-

viding penalties for present or past CIA officials who intentionally disclose such names or the means for identifying them. Unlike other proposals, however, "the bill contains no restrictions whatsoever on the press."

- Require advance notice of major covert actions and major intelligence-gathering operations by any government agency to the Senate and House Intelligence committees. The information would be shared with key members of other congressional committees such as House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations.

- Add a proviso concerning the Freedom of Information Act to make it clear that nothing in the law requires disclosure of any intelligence links or informational exchanges with foreign governments or sources.

- Permit surveillance of Americans abroad under a system of secret court-issued warrants, "based on a criminal standard." Spying on Americans solely because they have information the government deems important would not be permitted.

- Prohibit the paid use of journalists, clergymen and academics for intelligence purposes. Similarly, CIA agents would not be allowed to pose as journalists, clergymen or academics.

Aspin said his bill "is intended neither to emasculate the intelligence services or to allow them free run of the globe." He called it "an honest effort to provide those restraints that will prevent a return to 'the good old days' that proved to be an embarrassment to us as a nation while at the same time recognizing that our intelligence services cannot be expected to operate in a goldfish bowl like some social service agency."